

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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AMCONSUL KARACHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 5067

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PK, US
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH GHULAM ISHAQ: HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: STATE 126516

1. DURING MY MAY 22 CALL ON SECRETARY GENERAL-IN-CHIEF GHULAM ISHAQ, I RAISED OUR CONCERNS OVER POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN PREVENTIVE ARRESTS AND IN THE CONTINUING CONFRONTATION WITH JOURNALISTS. NOTING THAT I HAD NO DESIRE TO COMMENT ON PAKISTAN'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS, OR THE MERITS OF INDIVIDUAL CASES, I NEVER-THELESS WANTED TO LET ISHAQ KNOW OF STRONG AMERICAN GOVT AND PRIVATE INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS AND THE POTENTIAL IN THESE TWO AREAS FOR ADVERSE REACTION TO DEVELOP IN THE U.S.

2. RATHER THAN SIMPLY TAKING NOTE OF MY VIEWS, ISHAQ CHOSE TO ENGAGE IN A SOMEWHAT FEISTY DISCUSSION OF WESTERN MISAPPREHENSIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN
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PAKISTAN. HE ASKED IF WE HAD COMPARED FIGURES FOR POLITICAL DETAINEES BY THIS GOVERNMENT AND ITS PREDECESSOR AND NOTED THAT THE MAL HAD "EMPTIED THE JAILS" AFTER RAJULY 5. HE THEN ASKED IF THE GOP HAD NO RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST SABOTEURS WHO WOULD BLOW UP RAILROADS AND AGITATORS WHO SOUGHT TO OVERTURN THE HIGH COURTS'S VERDICT ON BHUTTO THROUGH STREET VIOLENCE.

3. I SOUGHT TO CALM ISHAQ BY NOTING THAT WE HAD INDEED BEEN VERY FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY OME HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD OF THIS GOVERNMENT WHEN IT FIRST CAME TO POWER; BUT WE ARE CONCERNED BY THE PRESENT REND WHICH APPEARS TO BE IN THE DIRECTION OF INCREASED PREVENTIVE DENTENTIONS. ISHAQ, IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION, SAID THAT HE COULD NOT GIVE ME A PRECISE FIGURE FOR PREVENTIVE DETENTIOSNS, BUT ASSERTED (RIGHTLY WE BELIEVE) THAT MOST OF THOSE ARRESTED BY THE MLA WERE SPECIFICALLY CHARGED WITH VIOLATIONS OF LAW OR MARTIAL LAW REGULATIONS.

4. ISHAW ALSO ATTEMPTED TO MAKE AN UNFAVORABLE COMPARISON BETWSWN WESTERN COMPLAINTS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS VILATIONS IN PAKISTAN AND INDIFFERENCE TO THE BLOODY EVENTS IN KABUL. HE SEEMED SOMEWHAT MOLLIFIED TO LEARN THAT THE USG HAD INDEED MADE ITS HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS KNOWN TO THE GOA IN PRIVATE DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES.

5. COMMENT: THE GOP IS EXTREMELY DEFENSIVE OVER WHAT IT REGARDS AS SENSATIONALIST COVERAGE OF HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS--PARTICULARLY ASSERTIONS THAT BHUTTO'S TRIAL HAD BEEN UNFAIR--WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS. WHILE MOST OF THE IRE IS DIRECTED AGAINST THE UK (AND PARTICULARLY A SOMEWHAT "YELLOW JOURNALISM" ITV PROGRAM ON PAKISTAN), MY REMARKS WERE OBVIOUSLY SALT IN CONFIDENTIAL

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AND OPEN WOUND.
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